



## Are you getting the message?



*Ingo Roessler, chief commercial officer for EDIfly*

By: Peter Conway

28.06.2013 | ARE CARGO departments of airlines resistant to new technology, or is it just that the decision-making within carriers is often a bit complex? You might deduce either from the story of EDIfly, a simple way for airlines to save messaging costs that is nevertheless still in the pending drawer at many airlines.

It should be said straight off that EDIfly is no untested left-of-field idea. It was adopted by Cargolux 18 months ago – about as prestigious an endorsement as you can hope to find in air cargo – and they claim to have saved 61 per cent, or around US\$200,000, on messaging costs as a result. Ingo Roessler, chief commercial officer for EDIfly, reckons that some other carriers he is talking to could save seven-digit sums.

The product is very straightforward. Its basic version sits on a carrier's or forwarder's messaging server and checks any message that is about to be sent via traditional EDI networks, such as SITA or ARINC.

If the recipient is another EDIfly customer, the message is instead routed over the internet for free. If not, it is sent on its way over the traditional EDI network, accruing messaging costs.

Put like that, there seems to be plenty of upside, so why the apparent caution from prospective air cargo customers? Roessler says the speed and reliability of the internet is certainly no longer an issue.

“Let's face it. Internet infrastructure these days is built for streaming video, while the messages we send are so small that they are insignificant in file size,” he says. “Our application can send 300 messages from a single server in one second.

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As for reliability, if you send a message on a traditional network it has only one way to go, but the internet was designed to have an infinite number of routes by which to transmit data.”

Instead, Roessler reckons the key problems in many airlines are two-fold. On the one hand, messaging costs are not a very sexy subject but, on the other, the messages themselves are mission-critical.

That makes people nervous of changing the way they are sent, since it is unlikely to advance their career much if it works, but which could really damage their prospects if it fails.

“Technical people are very, very conservative,” Roessler observes. “They like to see any new concept pass the test of time before they adopt it.”

Another issue is that passenger and cargo messaging is often purchased together. “For combination carriers, 80 per cent of the messaging can be on the passenger side,” Roessler points out.

“So even though it would make sense to use our application just for cargo traffic alone, the technical people in many carriers tend to want to look at the big picture.”

To get round the logjam, EDIfly has been working intensively with the leading automated passenger reservations systems: it has been doing thorough testing with Sabre, for example.

“To put an application into the datacentre of such entities can’t be done overnight,” says Roessler. “But now they have fully assessed its technical capabilities, and we have a handful of carriers due to start testing or even go live on the passenger side within the next month.”

Thanks to Cargolux, those that do opt for EDIfly will find many ways to use the service. The messaging company allows carriers to offer it to their handler for free and, in all, Cargolux has offered the software to 30 such partners worldwide.

One is Swissport, which now has it installed at all its 160 locations worldwide, and others include SATS in Singapore and HACTL in Hong Kong. Leading forwarder Schenker is also on EDIfly.

Roessler is confident that with these kind of endorsements, and the support of the passenger side of the business, EDIfly will soon be bringing new carriers on stream, predicting that 10 will be online by the end of the year.

“Confidence in the product is building and word of mouth is starting to work,” he says. He even claims that some type B messaging suppliers are getting concerned about EDIfly’s success: “This shows we have a very interesting product and some mess-aging providers have a lot to lose.”



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Apart from the general drive to cut costs, Roessler thinks that one key benefit of EDIfly could be in encouraging e-freight adoption. “The reason e-freight has not taken off as it should have has a lot to do with the costs of messaging,” he says.

“When I worked at Etihad and Royal Jordanian, the IT department said don’t log all the messages on the systems you have purchased because it will cost too much in type B messaging. Many companies now use email to get round this, but then you don’t have any proof that the message was received.”

EDIfly, by contrast, does have such proof, sending a digital receipt back to the sender. “In SITA you are just dumping the message into a big black hole. They guarantee to deliver it in 24 hours and, granted, usually it’s much faster. But you can’t verify it. With our technology you can.”

Looking at the immediate prospects, while Roessler is keen to land some more big customers, he thinks small-to-medium-sized carriers are probably more likely to sign up in the near future. “Very big carriers tend to have the best deals with existing messaging providers,” he says.

To appeal to these smaller customers, EDIfly has teamed up with Lufthansa Systems to offer EDIfly Global Box, a complete messaging service that, as well as routing EDIfly messages over the internet, can also replace a subscription to SITA and AIRINC for non-EDIfly messages with a more competitive package.

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